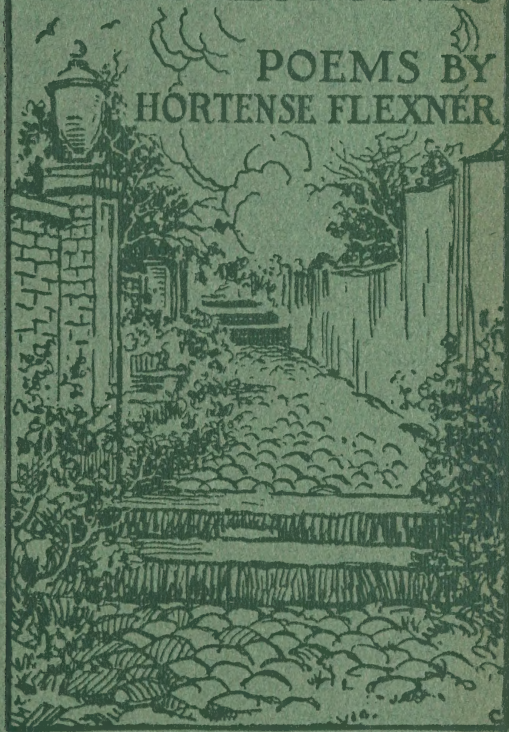


CLOUDS AND COBBLESTONES

POEMS BY
HORTENSE FLEXNER

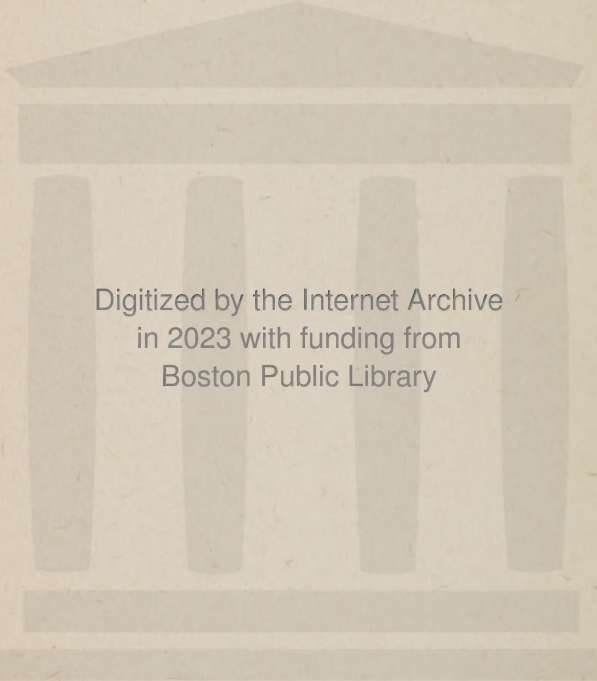


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Clouds and Cobblestones

Poems

Clouds and Cobblestones

Poems

By

HORTENSE FLEXNER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TO MY
MOTHER AND FATHER

NOTE

Following is a list of poems included in this collection which have been published in magazines:

"Fulfillment," "Belief," "Treasure," "Window-Candle," "A Girl in the Crowd," and "Four Things" in *The Smart Set*; "A Chinese Singer of 1200 B. C.," "The Holiday," and "If God had Known," in the *London Bookman*; "Faith" and "Purchase," in *Harper's*; "Remembrance" in the *Atlantic Monthly*; "The Potter's Park," in the *Century*; "For a Child" and "For a Portrait," in the *Boston Transcript*; "Sand," in *Contemporary Verse*; "Hunger," "Flanders Hill," and "Return from Captivity," in *The Liberator*; "Compulsion," in *The Seven Arts*; "Perfection," "Newswoman," "A Sky-Scraper," "Futility," "Pierrot," "Peter Pan," and "The Lost Pleiad," in the *Bryn Mawr Lantern*; "Longing" and "Minor Poet," in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*; "To a Grasshopper," in the *New York Sun*; "Munitions," in *The New Republic*; "Death-Mask of an Unknown Soldier" and "Foreboding," in the *North American Review*; "Gifts," "A Child," "Children's Ward," and "Wandering," in *The Survey*; "Troy, 1915," "The Goblin at Rheims," and "Bagdad," in the *New York Times*; "Death

will not Dare," in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*; "For an Old Lady to whom Sonnets had been Written," in *Vanity Fair*; "Street of Good Fortune—Pompeii," in the *Michigan Inlander*; "Dowager," in the *Bryn Mawr Review*; "Snuff-Boxes," in *Life*.

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CLOUDS AND COBBLESTONES

FAITH

IF on this night of still, white cold,
I can remember May,
New green of tree and underbrush,
A hillside orchard's mounting flush,
The scent of earth and noon's blue hush,
A robin's jaunty way;

If on this night of bitter frost,
I know such things can be,
That lovely May is true—ah, well,
I shall believe the tales men tell,
Wonders of bliss and asphodel,
And immortality.

REMEMBRANCE

WOUNDED, the steel-ribbed bird dipped to the
sea,

Its vast wings twisted, struggling with the air
That would not bear it up, and heavily
Struck the still water, sleeping idly where
The gold-arched noon had lulled it into dream.
So, there was foaming tumult and the fret
Of waves on heated steel, then silver steam
That hung, like fallen cloud, where they had
met.

And that small, striving thing that fought
away,

Free of the wreckage, did he, dying, hear
The waters murmur of another day,
A noon, now long ago, yet strangely near;
The waters telling drowsily of one
Who with his wings of wax dared seek the sun?

SAND

THE sand, which will not hold the print of my
 foot,
Remembers, none the less,
Chaos,
The birth of stars,
And the sunken lines of sea-devoured continents.
It is the gray hair of earth,
Bleached and wave-beaten,
That has known the passionate rage of waters,
White heat of sun,
And the slow passing of a thousand thousand
 years.

IF GOD HAD KNOWN

If God had known,
When in the seething murk
He bound the waters wild,
And hung the skies before Him for a veil,
Two souls should yearn and catch a glimpse
and fail,
Strive in the gray, till passion had grown stale;
Oh, would He then have smiled
Upon His work?

If God had known,
Before His dream gave birth,
To moon and star, flame-swayed,
How this frail lad, chained far from cloud and sky,
Should, for a spoken word, in darkness die,
A lad of wind and light, with laughing eye;
Oh, would God then have made
The fruitful earth?

If He had known,
In the long starless night,
Before the first dawn shed
Its gleam on cloud and wave in chaos rolled,
That one — a child — an instant's wingèd gold,
Should for her body's hunger thus be sold;
Oh, would God then have said,
“Let there be light”?

CHILDREN'S WARD

SHE had been sent for — visiting hours were
past —

The Lithuanian woman with the blue,
Deep-shadowed eyes. The child's bed was the
last,

And as she crossed the room, she knew — she
knew.

White-faced she stood, the broad young shoul-
ders drooped

Beneath the hooded gown that visitors wear;
The nurse had left her; suddenly she stooped,
The hood slipped back and showed her braided
hair.

There was no cry! The Russians weep and
pray,
Italians beat their breasts. This woman turned,
Asked for his clothes, tearless and calm and
gray;

The doctor told her they had all been burned.
So she was gone — only her great eyes said,
What thing is lost when a small child is dead!

HUNGER

I HAVE heard that the tides yearn for the moon,
And the hearts of men for the Spring,
That the mountains reach eternally to the stars,
And the winds, hungering, cry in waste places;
I have heard of a youth, long ago,
Who died for a dream;
But is it not odd that I should see
In one face,
The angular, gray face
Of a worked-out, dull, old woman,
Staring into a shop-window,
All of these things?

TO A CHINESE SINGER OF 1200 B.C.

THREE thousand years! And still your song
Beats in each word I write.

The empty dusk, these yearning hands,
Stars, and the wind in foreign lands,
A fluttering step on opal sands,
Deep eyes that hold the night;

All yours! Noon adds no dream to dawn,
Nor soothes the age-old ache;
And yet I hope that first spring day,
Three thousand weary years away,
My sister need not know, nor say,
That hearts will break.

MASKS

A PLEASANT scent is on the steamy air
Of oils and herbs and soap. Women half sleep
Before the lighted mirrors while their hair
Is brushed, or while deft fingers ply and creep
Over face-muscles or a sagging throat,
That shows a little yellowish when bare. —
The room is still, a sunny blind is drawn,
A chair shifts, or one voice remote
Drones gossip through a smothered yawn;
A young girl smiles, tilts up a lovely head
In a rare way, that makes the attendant note
How she would lie in bed.

Matrons are here, erect, well-cared-for, dressed
To flash, for all who look, the best
That may be had in living —
Furs, motors, servants, warmth and ease,
All taking, little giving;
Women cast in a mould half perfume, paste,
Passionate, idle, kind, in varying degrees,
Their souls in stays, upright and firmly laced.
And there are old-maids, frail and over-bred,
With long-boned hands that twist a silver chain,
While puffy blondes decide to have, "Instead
Of gold this time, a bit of henna stain."
And brave old ladies who have lost the fight,
Yet quite ignore the point,

MASKS

Rustle and preen themselves, though dim of
sight,
And very stiff of joint.

So they come in, gracious, aloof, serene,
And sit before the glass in a bright stall,
And face themselves, as if they had not seen,
As if it mattered not at all
How in the glass,
A certain thing, avoided and put by,
Comes more and more to pass.
They sit and turn their heads and vaguely try,
With an old gesture, an unyielding trace
Of pride — to cut, ignore, deny
The gently crumbling face,
Like a worn mask — that gently drowns here
Above a fear — a great crude fear,
A half seen thing,
Such as rude peasants know, who front the
black,
Strange night, with club and sling,
Hearing draw near, by leaves and twigs that
crack,
Some prowling thing!

WANDERING

VAGUE winds of sorrow blow
Across the night's wide lake;
There is a road I know,
But may not take.

There is a house of vines,
Where friendly shadows lie;
The window-candle shines,
But I pass by.

Afar my pilgrim load
I bear — yet evermore
My feet are on that road,
My hand is at the door.

RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

AFTER the longest exile they return,
Men who have hung their harps on willow-trees
Of many lands, and wept in dark sojourn
Beside all waters flowing to all seas;
Their feet are crowding down the sacred road,
Prophets in rags, starved seers, and minstrels
dumb,
Marked by their toil, scarred by the thong and
load,

They lift their eyes unto the hills and come!

The Joppa Gate swings wide, they shall go in,
Before their sight the Temple walls shall rise,
Nor hammer stroke be heard for the glad din
Of hearts and praises lifting to the skies.
How old a dream strikes root upon this day
They only know who face the Arc to pray!

LONGING

Out of the night I hear a voice,
Out of the sea a cry,
The swift, white arms of the reaching waves
Toss, as we pass them by,
The foam hands grasp in the emptiness,
And sink in the black, to die!

I lean to the night, I lean to the sea,
To the round on round of blue,
Where the barren stretch of the moon-laced
 waves
Divides the world in two.
There is no comfort in the dark,
I may not come to you.

FOR A PORTRAIT

I HAVE a fancy
That my eyes,
And the eyes of a million lovers like me,
Have given to this portrait,
Painted so long ago,
Something of the flame and renewed passion
That burn upon it.
How else should it live so brightly,
How should it hold fresh colors,
Motion, transient mood and shadow,
If our eyes,
Uniting with its beauty,
Did not create
The mystic warmth and life,
Which are its immortality?

FOUR THINGS

FOUR things I cannot remember
In the fullness of their grace,
Wind of the Spring, curve of the sea,
The moon's pale touch on a white birch-tree,
And your kiss upon my face.

For though I cherish and hold them,
The heavy winter through,
Spring is more gay, the sea-foam-wrought,
And the birch, are lovelier than I thought;
And a kiss is always new.

BELIEF

IN six gold weeks of summer
The stripéd bee,
Still eager for more roses,
And sunny paths of clover sweetness,
Dies,
Believing that flowers are eternal.

THE LADY ABBESS

(FOR A. B. M'G.)

A LADY tall and frail and rare,
She comes wind-blown along the street;
From places far and otherwhere,
She comes on swift and gentle feet,
And though she wears no snowy hood,
Nor trailing robe — I know she should.

For she has walked down shadowed halls,
Past pointed windows — known soft bells,
Dwelt in great peace behind white walls,
With sorrow that she never tells,
And made those glad who crossed her way,
Pale fluttering nuns, in white and gray.

A SKY-SCRAPER

WE have grown very sapient with the years,
And many things beyond our fathers' dream
Have done — made manifold our eyes and ears,
Increased our hands with swollen strength of
steam;

And we have trained the rivers to slow toil,
Driven with whips the red-maned fires of day,
To rear a dwelling-place upon fair soil,
Which may well hold Eternity at bay!

And yet, as to the clouds we urge the frame
Of climbing steel, the tongues of foreign men,
Their accents harshly mingling, still proclaim
The warning of mad Babel. Now as then
God holds us off. With all our wisdom high,
We have not built the tower to pierce the sky!

THE HOLIDAY

My soul went forth in green and gold,
It was a holiday;
In light and blossoms was she crowned,
The month was May,
My soul was blithe, I heard her sing,
As she went down the way:

"Let us be glad because the earth
Is new with love and song,
Let us be glad that we are fair,
And that the day is long,
Oh, let us dance, since right and love
Have triumphed over wrong!"

It was the twilight when my soul
Came silent, home to me,
Her frock was rent from hem to ruff,
There was no light to see,
Below the tattered crown her eyes
Wept bitterly.

"Why come you weeping from the feast?"
Unto my soul I said;
"Bring me," quoth she, "my cloak of gray,
The gray hood for my head,
Bring me my robe of work and tears,
The holiday is dead.

THE HOLIDAY

“For some will dance and others sing,
Nor see the sun drop low,
They do not hear above their joy
The voice that bids me go;
The cloak of gray was made for me,
But why I do not know.”

A FABLE

IN the beginning
There were no birds,
According to a fable
Of most doubtful origin.
Even after the seventh day
There were no birds
To sing!
Until, long after,
The Lord, having rested well,
Was in mood to visit His work,
To measure what He had done!
Then, looking down,
And seeing beauty was as it is,
The Lord said, "Oh,"
Which took red wings and flew,
And the Lord said, "Ah,"
Which was a bluebird,
And the Lord drew in His breath,
Whereat the air was thick with song.
"All birds," said the fable,
"Are God's exclamation
At the beauty of the earth."

A PATTERN

THERE is a vine that faintly crawls
Upon my faintly patterned walls,
A vine with leaves that have not grown
In any land that I have known, .
A wind-caught vine that dimly brands
My memory — with its leaves like hands.

For sometimes when a pale light shines
And weaves as water through the vines,
Their weary leaves — I think I see
Things that are part, yet out of me,
And part of things I cannot say,
As broken dreams that haunt the day.

I know this shadow mesh has moved
Across some temple step, deep-grooved,
Where I, for a sharp moment, heard
Bells and dim prayers . . . The shadows stirred;
Or were they hands that beckoned far,
Beyond the rim of what dead star?

And when the moon slips whitely in
Along the wall, I hear a din
Of feet and horses, trumpet blare,
And see, perhaps, a lady fair
Ride past, her frail hands resting cold
On silk embossed with vines of gold.

POEMS

And once, I heard a feeble cry,
An infant's wail, half sob, half sigh,
So far away — and yet I knew
A shoulder clothed in patterned blue,
And weary hands that quite beguiled
And comforted — what woeful child?

There is a vine that faintly crawls
Upon my faintly papered walls,
A vine with leaves that have not grown
In any land that I have known,
A wind-caught vine that dimly brands
My memory — with its leaves like hands.

TROY, 1915

PAST the gray shore, faint in the mist as when
The shadow ships lay high in drifted sand,
Swing the dim dreadnoughts, bearing hosts of
men,

To hurl new ruin and blight upon this land
Of ancient wars, where death still lies in wait,
And restless winds bring echoed cries and calls,
Where on the vacant plain, those who watch
late,

Hear the dull boom of falling towers and walls.

What fires, dust-smouldering, flare? What
quarrel now,

For beauty wronged, stirs passionate strength
to smite?

What lover with fair talk and broken vow
Steals from his host's door laughing in the
night?

Helen, sleep well! No woman's yearning lips,
Nor eyes, love-weary, launch these deadly
ships!

A MEETING

THANK you, maiden with the feather,
With the green and sparkling feather,
In your hat!
Thanks, that, spite of dreary weather,
People crowded close together,
As I sat
Taking notes, my eyes could see,
Like the fresh leaves of a tree
In the Spring,
All the feather's merry glee,
Green as waves are said to be,
Joyous thing!

Thank you, maiden with the feather,
With the out-of-doors, new feather,
Mocking, bright!
Though the musty chair of leather,
And my notes, a weary tether,
Held me tight;
Still your feather, jaunty, gay,
Whispered, "Sometime, on a day,
Not too far,
Spring, all spent with love and play,
Shall come shining down the way.
Like a star."

FOR TREES

THE old tree lives so long,
Because each year,
April,
For a short singing space,
Brings tiny leaves.
Would that I might
As the ancient tree in Spring,
Fold a green scarf about me,
And be young.
If I could sleep so long
Under the snow,
As the trees of the orchard,
So might the sun
Make me to bear white blossoms
For a thousand years.

MINOR POET

It is not that you had only one
Very good thought,
Great men survive, as a rule,
By not more than five — sometimes seven.
But they have a way of riding at beauty
With a lifted spear,
And at truth with a sword.
In a cloud of flame and battle they ride —
And their hands are torn.

And you — you said a great many things,
With one good one.
But there are no high, invisible banners
Waving about your words;
There is no mist in your throat,
And the stars do not choke you!

FOR A CHILD

I do not know what day I came away
From that quaint shining country where you
find

Fair things so near; trees that bend down to
play,

White mushroom tables where the elves have
dined

Beside the door, while you were fast asleep;
And everywhere strange moving things to touch,
A shadow leaf to hold, but not to keep,
And little furry animals to clutch.

Yet sometimes, when I listen to you tell
Of this gay land; the moon that follows you
Into the house, the goblin with his bell,
All silvery at night; to-morrow, what you'll do;
I marvel, since the light may fall so gray;
I did not know — that day I came away.

THE LOST PLEIAD
(CHICAGO ART MUSEUM)

WELL have they placed you here, poor frightened maid,
Fleeing the very shadows and the wind,
Strayed — ah, so many centuries ago,
From your blithe sisters in Thessalian woods.
It comforts not — the statue-peopled room,
The solemn visitors with catalogues,
Unfiltered sunlight on you where you stand!
Still are you lost, and now more lost than when,
Scanning dim forest aisles, and untried paths,
With hand to brow and tears and smothered
calls,
You fled and knew not where.
Are not we, with our hats, our gloves and shoes,
Dark leather bags, umbrellas and lorgnettes,
More to be feared than satyrs at their play,
Or teasing faun's quaint mockery of despair?

TO A GRASSHOPPER

(FOR M. S. A.)

O MAD musician, singing in the grass,
Trusting green ways and clear September sky,
How should you think that crimson leaves will
pass,

The towering golden-rod bend down to die;
Or that the flame-cupped poppy, blooming here,
Shall lend its petals to you for a bier?

With warmth you come, and with the warmth
will go,

Troubadour, piping to the summer sun,
Knight of the earth, so stanch you do not know
Your shining armor is of gossamer spun;
So brave with living that you will not heed
The wind, that gossips snowfall with a reed.

And so, sing on, nor fear the winter's breath,
You, who have never known the touch of frost;
Aye, serenade the very halls of death,
And cease with summer — wondering and lost
In freezing blasts, you did not dream might fall
Upon a world where light and song were all!

FUTILITY

ACROSS the iron wheel
Of the powerful engine
A tiny spider has spun in the night
His fragile web.
Now, at magnificent ease,
He sits in the center
Awaiting his prey.
It does not occur to him
That the eight-forty-five will start on time,
In spite of his preparation for quarry,
And a long day
Of hunting.

FULFILLMENT

SOME dusk the door I strive against shall give,
And I shall see the garden veiled in gray,
Friendly as that faint dream I made to live,
And fought for, with bare hands, the long white
day.

I shall go in to flowers gently blown,
White-blossomed trees, and paths of healing
sands,
I shall go in, and I shall take my own —
A stranger with unsightly bleeding hands.

DEATH-MASK OF AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER

DEATH is dark sleep and death is very still,
Yet in this sleeping face, shadowed, too lean,
There lives a little smile aloof and chill,
A little mocking smile that lurks between
The even lips firm-sealed, final as stone,
And the nostril's subtle lift; the eyes are stern,
And in their hollows dark all pain is shown;
Yet the face smiles in gentle unconcern.

Something he knew too surely as he came
To the narrow door, with youth upon his head,
Something he saw, as by a livid flame,
Paltry, amusing, commonplace instead
Of what he'd thought; and so he closed his eyes.
The dead should not be cynical and wise.

ALL SOULS' NIGHT, 1917

You heap the logs and try to fill
The little room with words and cheer,
But silent feet are on the hill,
Across the window veiled eyes peer.

The hosts of lovers, young in death,
Go seeking down the world to-night,
Remembering faces, warmth and breath —
And they shall seek till it is light.

Then let the white-flaked logs burn low,
Lest those who drift before the storm
See gladness on our hearth and know
There is no flame can make them warm.

HAVOC

THERE has been ruin of old and swift decay,
The sand has taken cities in the night,
And with its yellow silence smiled away
House-top and wall and turret gay with light;
And the gray sea has spun a misty shroud
For ships adventuring to their doom unseen,
While the high wrath of some black-shouldered
cloud

Has wasted loveliness. These things have been!

But I have known what all the years have
lost,

In one new ruin slow crumbling to its bed —
A forest of tall trees stark after frost,
The gaunt boughs dark above their scattered
dead;

Here is an end — a waste where winds shall
blow

As through a city, dust how long ago!

KHAKI

UNDER the slow-turning suns,
Age after age,
A bending animal,
A stooped thing,
Whose seed was yet to be man —
Has fought through many deaths
To one end —
Uprightness and aloofness
From mud.
But to-day I saw a column of men
Marching on a field,
Striving again to be one
With mud.

MAMMON REDEEMED

WE, Mammon, have made you free,
Westerners, sons of the high noon,
Body and spirit glad!
Out of the evil, like yourself, that is in us,
Out of the good, like daylight in our blood,
We have gone down to your habitation!
The caverns of gluttony, wilderness of lust,
Litter of broken dreams and gold-clogged hopes,
Fearless we passed and drew you forth;
You of the shrunken body, and sun-blind eyes,
God of the hollowed hands,
Huge, web-fingered, older than Cain,
Hands that have held the earth,
As a thin-shelled, misformed egg,
And hatched it to their shape.
You do we place above us in the square,
And worship with bold eyes;
For we are weary of praying in the dark,
Denying whom we love,
Neglecting our benefactor.
Do we not know with whom we walk and live?
O Builder, Wrecker of the blind, brute ways,
Your strength is hunger and your grip is need.
You may we not put off!
Ever the body chain must bind us to you;
How far we go, we may not lose its straining;
The very stars we win are bought in bondage,

MAMMON REDEEMED

And not one deed but bears the shackle's scar
Across its root.

All that is good, swift-growing, wide and free
Beneath the hands of men,
Lives of your nourishment,
And who would work his will in love and dream
Must bear your gifts.

Wherefore, Mammon, the word!
After the age-old night, the fearful hiding,
You stand beneath the day,
Reclaimed of men.
And men shall give to you,
By all the healing wonder of the sun,
A soul!

THE GOBLIN AT RHEIMS

FROM his high arch, nestled in stony nook,
He used to leer across the twilight space
Of the great aisle — the goblin with the book,
Bent in huge hands. Half lost in ivoried lace
Of shadow carving, scrolls and thick-twined
 gorse,

His savage face was sly with some dark jest;
I thought it strange he lived so cruel, coarse,
Above five centuries' drifted prayer and rest.

To-day I knew him by his evil sneer,
In shattered rose-glass, fretwork, fallen towers;
And wondered if he told his maker's fear
Of this far shame. But no — who dreamed
 these flowers,

Modeled of light, this laughing cherub's wing,
How should he think men's hands might do
 this thing?

UNHEALED

IN the winter when the snow
Cried beneath the laden dray,
Looking on my grief I said,
"Glad am I the winter day,
Not the sparkling month of May,
Sees my love thus broken, dead."

But alas, now May has come,
Stirred the earth to song and light,
Filled the air with whispering,
Cries my heart in fettered might,
"Love that dies in tears and night
Dies anew each day of Spring."

PURCHASE ¹

THEY shall come in and chat, their purses hid,
The men who hold rare things and gently smile;
They shall disturb frail musty sheets, and bid
A fortune for this letter or gray file
Of parchment, nobly written by the hand
That loved to gleam in gems and curious rings,
Point out a man for death; give castles, land,
Or rest on ermined shoulders of tall kings.

And through the room, as from an unsealed
urn,
Shadows will drift, faint shapes of Florence,
dead,
Born of these records men shall lift and turn,
Knowing as he who gave the artists bread
For white madonnas, saints, God's cloudy
throne,
A man may buy what he can never own!

¹ Certain letters written by Lorenzo de' Medici are sold at auction.

FLANDERS HILL

A FOREST of sharp skeletons flame-seared,
They stand above the hill, the ancient trees,
A waste of broken trunks the shells have cleared
Of swaying branch and leaf and woodland ease.

So still they are, the Spring shall turn aside,
Summer shall never touch their blackened sleep,
They know — they know earth's laughing heart
 has died,
The ancient trees, whose roots have pierced so
 deep.

THE SONS OF ICARUS

UP through the clouds, and higher, higher still,
Flew Icarus the free, on untried wings,
Mad with the song-filled spaces of the blue,
Encircling dome — outsoaring wantonly
The cloud-sailed galleons and the wind-built
 walls
Of dim, mist citadels that plunged and swayed,
Or, crumbling, died in rainbow agonies.

Below, an opal, rimmed in liquid gold,
The earth, his prison lay, a thing for scorn,
Chained by the flashing tides.

White Icarus

Breasting the swirling waves of jeweled snow,
Flew on — the mighty winds against his face,
The songs of unseen stars within his ears,
And gilded arches of the upper sky
Before his ardent gaze; flew till he lost
Remembrance of the earth he once had loved,
The blossomed Spring and Autumn's golden
 wine,
The hearth-stone of his mother and the ways
Of men, who live with feet upon the ground;
Forgot — O triumph of the wingéd air,—
The Cretan woe, the scar beneath his wings;
And soaring, singing, mounting ever, felt

THE SONS OF ICARUS

The motion steal his body's bone and weight,
Until at last, he knew a surging warmth,
And lifting dauntless eyes, beheld unveiled,
Full-splendored on his throne of light — the
God.

A moment paused the wings of Icarus,
A moment swayed he, mindful of a dream,
A voice once heard, an echo of the earth;
Then with a madder song more swiftly rose,
Until the white glow smote his very heart,
Broke wide the mortal prison where it beat,
And set it free at last, a thing of light,
To live forever, singing in the blue,
Nor heeding that a body's sky-wrecked ruin
Plunged to a violet sea.

And heedless are the after-men who hear,
On still, blue noons, or in the gold of dawn,
The wonder of the sun-freed heart that sings,
Waking a strange sky-yearning in their breasts,
The lift of wings, the glory of far clouds,
Calling aloft the children of the air.

Eager they listen, then with crafty tools
They make the wings, brave, man-made wings
as his,
That tremble to the hands, strain to the winds,
And strongly bear through pathless ways untried
The bird-souled sons of Icarus the Mad.

POEMS

O men of earth, who dare the sun's fierce
 strength,
Inheritors of unfamiliar space,
Flying too near the breaking point of law,
The rift where worlds divide — yours still the
 wings!
Not broken as they fall, a tattered shroud,
But banners of the air, flags of the vast
Uncharted, scarred by swords of flame and
 wind,
That play in vacancy — the flashing seal,
Borne to the conquered kingdom's utmost edge,
Set in the windy gateway of the sky,
Marking possession to eternity,
And flung to earth, the star-dust in their folds,
A pledge that men shall yet be borne with
 wings!

THE BRIGAND

THOSE days I walked with pirate and glad
thieves

Are somehow lost; there is no ogre now,
No crook-backed witch who croons the while
she weaves,

Nor Spanish brigand with his knitted brow;
That merry devil's brood who seized their gold,
Hid treasure, plundered, strung their victims
high,

Are shadows on a page — and I am old,
My ship is beached, its yellow bottom dry.

And yet there is one villain black and grim,
One bandit in the flesh who lays his snare
Before my eyes, and at his cruel whim
Leaps on his prey and kills — with what an
air!

The spider, hairy-legged, still plies his trade,
Red-sashed he comes, between his teeth the
blade!

ELEANOR AT THREE

I saw the sunlight on a lake,
I heard a bird sing in his tree,
A rose I had no heart to break,
An April breeze were kind to me;
And when to them I held arms wide,
I found you, Eleanor, inside.

Held you, all dancing light and gold,
Dim fragrance, music — and I said,
“Here is a sunbeam I may hold
For all my fingers are of lead.
Here is the Spring dawn come to stay,
A bird that will not fly away.”

But no — wind-fingers caught your dress;
The leaves called and you had to go,
With all the treasured loveliness
Of things that men forget to know,
In earth's worn path, so glad, so new,
You thought that I might follow you!

WINDOW-CANDLE

I SHALL remember many nights,
Of hill and wind and sky;
I shall remember how we stood
In a starry-hearted solitude,
Or crossed the untamed, moon-wise wood,
Putting thorn-fingers by;

And other nights of near, sweet ways
Shall stay with me — but last
This one — we came, day-worn and slow,
Into the hedge-rimmed path we know,
And saw the window-candle glow,
Will-o'-the-wisp chained fast.

TREASURE

THE little pilfering hands of hours and days
Bury much loveliness and treasured gold,
Savor and essence, cloud and warm scent and
haze,

Small things accustomed, all too frail to hold.
But I would have remembrance full and keen,
Nor yield one leaf, or cloud, or shadow's blue,
One little thrusting wind, one hill's tall green,
The outer way of wonder we passed through.

The fear grows with me that I shall forget,
Never your love, but half-seen things of grace,
Beauty we took and marveled at and set
Aside, half blindly, marking not its place;
This wealth put by, this gold too faint and rare,
I cannot count — and yet, I cannot spare.

FOLK-DANCE CLASS

(FOR C. F.)

"For to-day is the first of May."

(What matter? We work indoors.)

"And the miller grinds his flour to-day."

(Ours comes in a sack from the stores.)

"Green-gravel! Green-gravel! How green the
grass grows!"

(That's what they say, but nobody knows.)

The dancers in the shallow hall
Have mad, gay-colored shadows at their backs,
The heavy dancers flat of chest and small,
Who have not seen the corn, nor cut the flax;
Yet dimly know,
Under the music's hurrying lash,
Who are these shadows tossing wanton heads,
Letting their ribbons blow,
Blue, green, and flaming reds,
Making their cymbals clash.
The heavy dancers know, as if a sign
Had passed — a word had made them kin,
To these who haunt the music with their fine
Free bodies, beckoning brown and lean,
Beyond the walls — until, with shout and din,
'The dancers wake, thrust through the screen
That holds them in,

POEMS

And lift their heads, and stamp their feet and
run,
As through a village gate on to a green,
A village green that leads into the sun.

“Mother, may I go out to swim?”
(You may stitch on black till your eyes are
dim.)
“And where are you going, my pretty maid?”
(To work in the factory, sir, she said.)
“Oh, London Bridge is falling down.”
(But not the smoke-stacks in our town.)

The music tears their bodies with its hands,
Stirs them as sight of fire on a wide plain
At night; lulls them with crooning; brands
Their sense with heat of sun on fields of grain.
The mounting rhythm tugs at them and beats
Their blood, as winds beat water to a foam,
Whirls them through little towns with crooked
streets,
And drives them madly home!
All in an instant, while an old tune sings,
These children, starved of day and song and
mirth,
Touch with their naked feet the naked earth
That wakens in them, rings
Through them into a cry that they have known,
But have forgot —

FOLK-DANCE CLASS

The cry of earth unto her alien own,
Who have earth's sap for blood and ore for
bone,
And are made strong,
With feet upon the soil like planted stone,
And red lips shaped to song.

"For to-day is the first of May."
(We shall see the sunlight burn.)
"And the miller grinds his flour to-day."
(We shall watch the mill-wheel turn.)
"Green-gravel! Green-gravel! How green the
grass grows!"
(We shall tread it down with our naked toes.)

PERFECTION

VERY likely the savage
Who moulded, a thousand years ago,
The terra-cotta jar,
Irregular, lovely, with thumb-marks burned on
 its sides,
And finely penciled, uneven lines at the neck,
Dreamed of a contour,
Round, without blemish, smooth,
As this one, which I have bought
At the ten-cent store.

BAGDAD

THE tavern at the cross-roads of the world
Sleeps in the sun, held by an ancient dream;
Its door of gold, gem-crusted and impearled,
Still welcomes to dim halls the creeping stream
Of wanderers, beggars, princes in disguise,
Lean, sun-bronzed men of steppe and desert
seas,

Who rest at last beneath the low, starred skies,
Telling the journey in the tavern's ease.

And what mad storms this later day may
send,

What winds of death may rise and smite and
weep,

Shall have their way and pass — such is the end
Of storms and even death — nor touch this
sleep.

For lo! The tavern, with the door of gold,
Dreams and knows not the thousand tales are
told!

BREAKING THE MOULDS

WE are breaking up the moulds
With a rattle and a clatter,
Wielding hammers at strongholds,
Laughing as the fragments scatter,
And our hands, once brave for making,
Tear and hurl and crush and batter,
With a frenzy in the breaking,
And a passion that shall shatter
All the moulds,
The ancient moulds,
In this white hour of our waking.

So we swing the hammers high,
Braces yield and walls grow slack,
Spires topple from the sky,
Roof-trees massive, chimneys black,
Mosque and temple, shop and jail,
Make a litter like the sack
Of a town in some old tale,
When the moulds began to crack,
All the moulds,
The ancient moulds,
Weighed and wanting in the scale.

But a new world shall be won,
That no hand shall smite or tear —
So we cry, who stumble, run,

BREAKING THE MOULDS

Hammers lifted, while we spare
One small mould — two feet, two hands,
And a round head hot with hair!
This the mould that scars and brands
With its flaw, what worlds we dare!
This the mould,
The ancient mould,
That yields and bends and cracks — but stands!

We are breaking up the moulds
With a rattle and a clatter,
Wielding hammers at strongholds,
Laughing as the fragments scatter,
Singing as our chisels gnaw,
Biting through the stones we shatter,
Breaking without rule or law —
Moulds must go — it does not matter —
All the moulds,
The ancient moulds,
Shaped of one mould with a flaw!

SILHOUETTE

It quivered from the ground
And felt the air uphold its struggling wings,
The mounting aeroplane!
In the dim theater we watched its course
Upon the screen,
And saw it rise, until the villages
Were as toy houses ranged along a floor,
Till rivers and the roads seemed swirls of tape,
And only clouds were man-sized things and
true!

So, up and up — across wide plains of sky
The sharp wings fared;
And we sat wondering, feet upon the earth,
But spirits lifted, racing with keen winds
That fly between the stars.

And then — he stood —
The bulky man in front,
Drew on his coat, humped in thick folds,
His gloves,
Rounded his back and stooped to find his hat,
Stood square,
And blotted out the fluttering thing that held,
Singing within its engine's crowded space,
The spirit of a million million birds.

MUNITIONS

He wrapped the blunt-nosed thing and took
Its brother from the tray,
And that he wrapped — then more and more,
All shining, blunt-nosed, by the score,
And wrapped them so all day.

His neighbor laid them in a box,
Another fixed the lid;
The work was swift, and many hands,
Of sundry men of sundry lands,
Did it, as they were bid.

And what they knew of blunt-nosed things,
No word, nor shrewd glance said;
The work was theirs — this much was good,
For men must live and have their food,
Though other men lie dead!

A GIRL IN THE CROWD

I saw her pass and said, "The flame of her
Will not outlive my glance." So fragile, proud,
And spendthrift young, she burned along the
crowd,

A darting thing of rose and gold and myrrh,
Riding the day's glad wonder with a spur.
The motion of her was a running cloud,
Her promise all new leaves and fields fresh-
ploughed.

As if a wild-plum tree, some April noon,
Should wake and fling its bounty to the air,
Beside an age-wise ruin with creepers grown,
Trace on that mould its light and shadow rune,
So young against the wall — and yet aware
How, in one hour, it had outlived the stone.

TO PETER PAN

LEND me your pipes, glad Peter Pan,
Lend me your pipes to-day;
The windows of my heart are dark,
The children are away;
Unless I dance, I know I'll weep;
Lend me your pipes to play!

Dear Peter Pan, I too would be
A vagabond, to sing,
And yet, before I thought, the world
Had trapped me by my wing.
Now I am wise enough to know
It is not always Spring.

Give me your pipes, O Peter Pan;
The wind is bitter cold;
A trouble that you sang to sleep
Has wakened up to scold;
I almost fear — but whisper it —
Some day I shall grow old.

And that I cannot think to do
When all the world is fair,
And folk are going up and down
With ribbons in their hair,
And smiles and eyes are beckoning
Like May flowers in the air!

TO PETER PAN

Lend me, glad Peter Pan, your pipes,
And call your trusty band,
To drive away this grown-up woe;
O, take me by the hand,
And lead me, for I cannot see,
To Never Never Land!

FOREIGN NEWS

FROM half across the world
These yellowish, strangely printed papers come,
Pages too tightly furled,
With tales I know of slaughter and pogrom —
I slip into my chair, tilt higher
A low light at my elbow. But the tea
Is still too hot to drink, and so I skim
Headings that wail of exile, murder, fire,
Of laden backs slow passing to the sea,
Bent figures hurt in fiber, mind, and limb.

I think I do not see what things I read,
Or else I could not read and slowly sip
Comforting tea. This hunger and this need
Touch me with horror — and yet feebly slip
Into a cache,
An area off-focus, not quite true.
I cannot think that I
Would shake lean, starving fingers from my
dress,
And pass old women crouching in the street,
Or shapeless dead — pass calmly by
And stare quite through
Their ancient woe and tears and blind distress,
To come indoors to eat!

POEMS

And yet I do this thing,
Suffer with those who suffer — just so much —
And quite avoid the rude attack and clutch
Of panic — presence of the unknown dark.
I think I have a gift for locking in
Unpleasant agony and facts too stark,
With the old and shadowy sin
Of old dead lands half shadowy and mad,
That hardly matter now.
And since I would prefer earth to be glad,
I know well how
To group disturbing tales of blood and wrong
With Moloch, Blue-beard's wives, and such as
these,
To keep far from me — bread-lines three blocks
long,
And old men slain in cellars on their knees.

ON THE TOWN

THE tree at the door of the saloon
Is brazen and sordid.
It lifts to the sun worm-eaten leaves,
Branches whose curves have grown stiff
With evil living.
The hunger of crowds surging past,
Coarse laughter, cries and heavy feet,
The lurchings of drunken men,
Have touched and corrupted this tree,
Withered it like a harlot,
In old age shrill and selfish,
Meager of shade.
The wind in its branches,
Impudent and too free,
Stirs the brown leaves to ribald whisperings.

A MURDER

THERE is much talk and stir
About this puzzling case,
A stain, a scarf's torn fur
Found in a grimy place.

Detectives, hats pushed back,
Cough, turning and thrusting about,
Like dogs off scent and slack —
Weighing grave doubt and doubt.

Reporters chatting stand
On the stair, or swarm through the hall,
One with a long gray hand
Lifts a snap-shot from the wall.

The snow that the shoes track in
Turns brown on the carpeted floor,
A high bell pierces the din,
A heavy hand rattles the door.

And above, on a narrow bed,
Where the women shudder and weep,
A girl with a fair young head
Is sleeping an old old sleep.

DEATH WILL NOT DARE

Of all the cloudy armies that have passed
Down the gray earth, there is no soul that
knew

To vanquish death; but each alone, at last,
Has felt a weariness, a wind that blew
Heavy with sleep — and so has laid him down.
Robert the Strong, whose spear no man could
hurl,

Richard and William of the Dreadful Frown,
Have slept with glassy eyes, as might a churl.

But I, who still am warm and breathe the
air,

Cannot believe this dim unlikely end.

Those others have been trapped! Death will
not dare

To come to me, low-whispering, as a friend;

This body that I am can never lie

So heedless and so chill, as those who die.

A PARTING

BRIGHT afternoon, the public square,
We stood and thought to say good-bye;
The crowd went past, all unaware,
With talk and clang and newsboy cry;
We were just any two, as they,
In dark-stuff clothes, well-fed and gay.

And yet, for all the sound and light,
I knew the moment's offering.
Words? But your lips were of the night —
Low-flying clouds, and rain-sweet Spring,
And through the parting's gray disguise
I felt your kisses on my eyes.

FOR AN OLD LADY TO WHOM
SONNETS HAD BEEN WRITTEN

He praised in lines that everybody knew
Her hands, her brow, her pale and lovely face;
He dared not say (he was Victorian too)
How he was haunted by her body's grace;
He linked her name with magic names and old,
Helen, Iseult, Queen Meave and Guinevere,
He swore that years should never make her
cold,

Nor death appall her merry heart with fear.

But when I see her bending on her stick,
So careful where she steps — I know at last,
That earth is old and April but a trick,
That Troy is gone and Tyre and Sidon have
passed!

I think I saw their high towers falling down,
In an old lady's bleak, impatient frown.

INHERITANCE

PROMETHEUS, pitying men,
Dared the long wrath of gods,
Thongs and the vulture —
To bring to earth
The fire,
Before which I drowse,
In utter well-being.

PIERROT

How could I sleep so long;
The moon was low;
How could I close my eyes
On shadow, star, and skies,
And never know
The soft air held your song?
How could I sleep so long,
O Pierrot?

To-night I do not sleep;
The moon is low;
Beside my casement wide
I watch the shadows glide;
So long ago
You sang — alas, I weep,
To-night I do not sleep,
O Pierrot!

GIFTS

SHE tilts her face and smiles and asks
Some quaint gift for her play,
The friendly little girl next door,
Who thinks I have a magic store
Of lovely things — balloons and more —
Wonder for every day.

And I am just a bit amused
At her calm, trusting air;
I who have somehow grown to be
Older so many years than three,
Still asking all expectantly
For beauty — everywhere!

THE WAKEFUL DARK

THERE is a crowd upon the air to-night;
The leaves are out,
Clustered and gathered to the farthest tip
Of the dim branches' edge.
All in a day, the wet wind called
And they rushed forth,
Bearing the fragrance of the trees' deep heart
In their unfolding wings.
The dark is thickly plumed and tufted where
They wait, a misty, swinging crowd
Too glad for sleep.

Beside my window, restless too, I stand
Athirst like leaf and garden
For the day.
And when the moist wind, groping for more
 sweet,
Lilac or violet, or the new, slim buds,
Touches my face,
I feel the petals of my heart
Tremble and open wide,
As if it too
Had bloomed upon the night.

HELEN ON THE BATTLEMENT

UPON the tower she stands and bends above
The wall that rims its edge; her shoulders
 droop

Beneath the jeweled web enfolding them,
Her elbow meets the stone, and in the hand,
Cup-like and ivory-fingered, rests her chin.
The lips just meet, her eyes unshadowed, calm,
Dwell on the sea where ride the Grecian ships,
Dwell on the sun-bronzed sea, whose waves
 touch Greece.

It seems she feels no bitter love, no care,
This quiet eve; the southern wind, whose wings
Are veiled dreams, had stolen all her thoughts;
She might have been just any Trojan maid,
Had she not been so fair!

THE DEFEATED

I saw a dark procession
Go through my dream all night;
A line of women weeping,
A black line swaying, creeping,
Above a road too white.

And after it came children,
Small children without guile,
Who wore no black, nor wept,
But all in silence stept,
And not a one could smile.

BLOWN LEAVES

THE Autumn came to-day at dawn
With wind and flying cloud,
And that dear need of you I hide,
Waked to the yearning wind outside,
Held me half-dreaming, till I cried
Your name — your name aloud!

But later, when the sun was up,
And Indian Summer's flame
Spun earth to gold — oh, still I knew
The seeking, lonely wind that blew
At dawn — and whirled my heart to you,
A leaf, that cried a name!

STREET OF GOOD FORTUNE —
POMPEII

THE day was gray — a film of misty rain
Blew on a gentle wind through unroofed home,
Temple and marble bath. The stony lane
That once had been a street and looked toward
Rome,
Was ghostly-still and broken and bereft;
The weeds had grown, a lizard crawled in
fright
Across a rut by some swift chariot left,
Hastening in panic through that flame-shot
night.

The cool rain fell — we spoke of molten rock
Half carelessly — of sudden death and fear,
We who were still so blithe and quick to mock,
Who baked our loaves, thinking to-morrow
near;
While down Good Fortune Street, before our
eyes,
A green hill hissed white spirals to the skies.

“HER NAME THEY COULD NOT ASK”

(FOR J. M’G.)

I HAVE heard a ballad sung,
I have listened to a tale,
Of a lady blithe and young,
Gay of laughter, sweet of tongue,
Fey and flower-pale.

None there was who knew her sire,
None knew her land nor home;
Down the road she ran like fire,
The young winds tossed her laughter higher —
Was she flame or foam?

They knew not, the folk who fared
To field or simple task.
And her name — had they but dared!
Alas, they only smiled and stared.
Her name they could not ask.

For while they saw her face they knew
Most strange and lovely things;
A rounding coast and waters blue,
A yellow sail the sun strikes through,
And a scarlet bird that sings.

Or they remembered how a wall
Takes shadows in the moon;

“HER NAME THEY COULD NOT ASK”

They heard again the Spring rain fall,
And once, perhaps, a far sweet call
Down a drowsy afternoon.

Then she was gone and had not said
Her name to call her by.
They followed long where she had fled,
But those who pressed most far ahead,
What name had they to cry?

I have heard a ballad sung,
Of a lady fey,
Of a lady blithe and young,
Gay of laughter, sweet of tongue,
I saw her yesterday!

FOR THE UNKNOWN AUTHOR OF
HUMPTY-DUMPTY

You did not think to write your name
Across the jingle that has strayed
Down centuries — a song, a game
The tiny ones of earth have played.

By some swift sign they greet and know
Your solemn hero as a friend,
They hang upon his tale of woe,
And laugh — despite his tragic end.

A hundred times each day he dies,
Unaided by the King's good men;
And yet he lives in wondering eyes,
The small hands make him whole again.

SPRING'S WARES

COMES the Spring a gypsy merchant,
Spreading out her wares for me,
Lace of shadow, tender shoots,
Balm and gold and sleepy roots,
Cloud embroidery.

“Here’s pearl-white anemone,
Wet with snow — just out; and here
Lilac, honeysuckle vine,
Hiding flasks of honey-wine;
One wild rose! Too dear?”

“Or perhaps this bit of sun,
I give it with a butterfly,
Would you look at blossom trees?
Peach or plum? A gold-wing breeze!
See him — will you buy?”

“Last, but, Lady, pray beware,
An April dusk, all violet-sweet
Beneath the moon. One mad thrush calls,
Earth is so warm, so near! Night falls,
Lovers’ lips will meet!”

I, the winter-hearted, search
Spring’s new basket — turn away;
Neither under star nor flower
Could I find the singing hour
I would not have last May.

A CHILD

THE little maid next door is fair
As the white, wild-plum in May,
She runs with a leap and flying hair,
But tears are in her play.

She holds my hand when we go to walk,
Or ride in the crowded car,
Yet her round eyes shine through her baby-
talk,
As sad as the fairest star.

I tell her tales of elf and fern,
Wee, happy folk that fly;
She hears but, oh, where did she learn
To smile, and then, to sigh?

"SALOME" OF HENRI REGNAULT

THE artist has called you "Salome,"
And given you the salver and the sword,
But I cannot think you are the daughter of
Herodias.

Your beauty is complacent,
It is drowsy and fully revealed.
You have slept a great many afternoons
In the open fields of Spain,
And have wakened laughing,
To lift moist tendrils of black hair
From your neck.

The lazy sun is in your blood,
In the winning assurance of your eyes,
And your pleasant mouth.
I know that you are a dancer,
For your ankles are a trifle heavy,
And you would rise slowly to the music;
But I cannot think you would fancy, as a
reward,

The head of John the Baptist,
Or that you would refuse
The white peacocks of the King
In their cypress grove.
You are not the new moon of April,
Nor a slender flame whitely burning,
Nor the young leaves of Spring,
Nor the wind upon the waters;

"SALOME" OF HENRI REGNAULT

You are just a peasant girl,
Very lovely and content,
Musing, while you pose,
Of a festival,
Or a bright ribbon,
Or a lover,
Who is not a prophet.

FOREBODING

THERE is an ache close to the heart of things
This night, and tears are in the air,
A lurking heaviness the far wind brings,
And blows across the grayness of the square.
I do not know — to-morrow will be May,
And yet there is no song, no whispering mirth,
Only a burden left behind the day,
A shadow fallen dimly on the earth.
Is it that Spring, outdone with flowers and
 light,
Has flung herself upon the ground to rest,
And dreamed, as I, of drouth and storm and
 blight
On growing things — her gift with fruit unblest;
And waking in the dusk from this strange sleep,
Found in her laughing heart mad tears to weep?

THE POTTER'S PARK¹

THE men who lay in Potter's Field
Slept well in borrowed graves,
A world of souls that death had healed,
A million worthless knaves,
The unclaimed poor, laid row on row,
Close in their naked bed,
Rested in peace and did not know
A debt may bind the dead.

In ease they slept — the thief, the drone
Who starved upon his feet,
The quaking beggar and the crone,
Found in the public street,
The laggard, shadow folk who passed,
Or shivered as they stood,
Stumbled into a bed at last,
For which they chopped no wood!

And as they slept, they little knew,
How in the sun's gold grace,
The eager city pushed and grew
And claimed their resting-place,
Until — they would have laughed, these men,
Dumb in the crowded dark —

¹There is a public park in New York City on the site of the old Potter's Field.

THE POTTER'S PARK

A weighty council and a pen
Made Potter's Field a park.

A park with benches, shade and moss,
Green in the traffic din,
A spot for happy feet to cross —
The city bade them in;
Yet strange it was to see who came
And sat beneath the trees,
Gray men with leaden eyes the same
And hands upon their knees.

A laggard, shadow host they stole
Across the friendly lawn,
As they were tethered by the soul,
Nor knew why they were drawn;
But sat them down, the spent, the lean,
Alone, yet side by side,
A Potter's Field in gold and green,
The dead who have not died!

DOWAGER

THE hill fronts my garden
With patronizing calm,
Spreading stiff skirts about her
And looking down
On my too transient flowers,
With the inbred contempt of old blood
For the less old.
And yet I know that the hill,
Would never be so lofty nor secure,
Nor altogether respectably established,
If something very sudden
Had not happened
In her own family.

THE MASSEUSE

VERY strong and flexible
Are the fingers of Miss Celia,
The shadowy, lean old-maid
Who brushes my hair,
Or rubs out the tired wrinkles about my eyes.
I see her in the mirror,
Working in creaseless white,
Bending above me with eager deftness,
An exact and skillful zeal,
So tender in its assurance
That I think of her as a sweet, gray nun
Toiling strangely for the flesh,
Of which she knows nothing.

Yet at times, when her fingers sink
Into the living tendrils of hair,
Gold, bronze, or black,
Of a young girl with half-closed eyes
And heavy lips,
There comes into Miss Celia's face
A strange concealed glow,
A sort of brooding half passion,
As if her hands were absorbing
Some of the thoughts
Passing through the brain
Half asleep beneath her fingers.

COMPULSION

I SHALL put out my hand and raise the latch
Of this gray door, go in and let it close
On me and on the day. The bright sun patch
Here at my feet will fade, the iron rows
Of coat-hooks will be waiting, and stale air
Shall reek of steam. Although the Spring has
 come
Outside and clouds are high, how should winds
 dare
To sing a fluttering song where lips are dumb?

And I go in, crushing with tears the will
To turn and give myself to the young day;
Yet this I know — on some far April hill,
Where Spring is born, there falls a moment's
 gray —
Stillness on wing and flower and mounting
 green,
For I have hurt glad things I have not seen!

DEGENERATE

A DROWSY butterfly
With frail blue-spotted wings,
And the circling gesture
Of a scented fan
Swung by a delicate wrist —
Hovers over the weeds
At the edge
Of the garbage dump.

SNUFF-BOXES

(MORGAN COLLECTION, METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM)

THESE gay snuff-boxes will be whispering still
Of fragrant satin pockets that are dust,
Of iron wrists beneath a lacy frill,
Or candles long burnt-out, or swords that rust;
Here is dim gossip told in merry gems,
A dallying glance, a hand too hotly kissed;
And here are crests for pride, and diadems,
Deep set in sapphire or pale amethyst.

Trinkets — perhaps? Or dainty souls that
went

Enameled too, in colors frail and rare,
So idly living and so lightly spent,
They make a music still upon the air,
A tinkling tune for bow and stately tread,
That will play on, though all who danced are
dead.

NEWSWOMAN

WITHERED by frost and heat, patient, too old,
She wears a yellow scarf and strangely cries
The news — a Grecian woman who has told
What different tales beneath what different
 skies!

I like to think, when in the windy dark
I buy my paper, that the coin shall pay
A certain Ferryman who takes his bark
Across a silent River, for her way.

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